



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

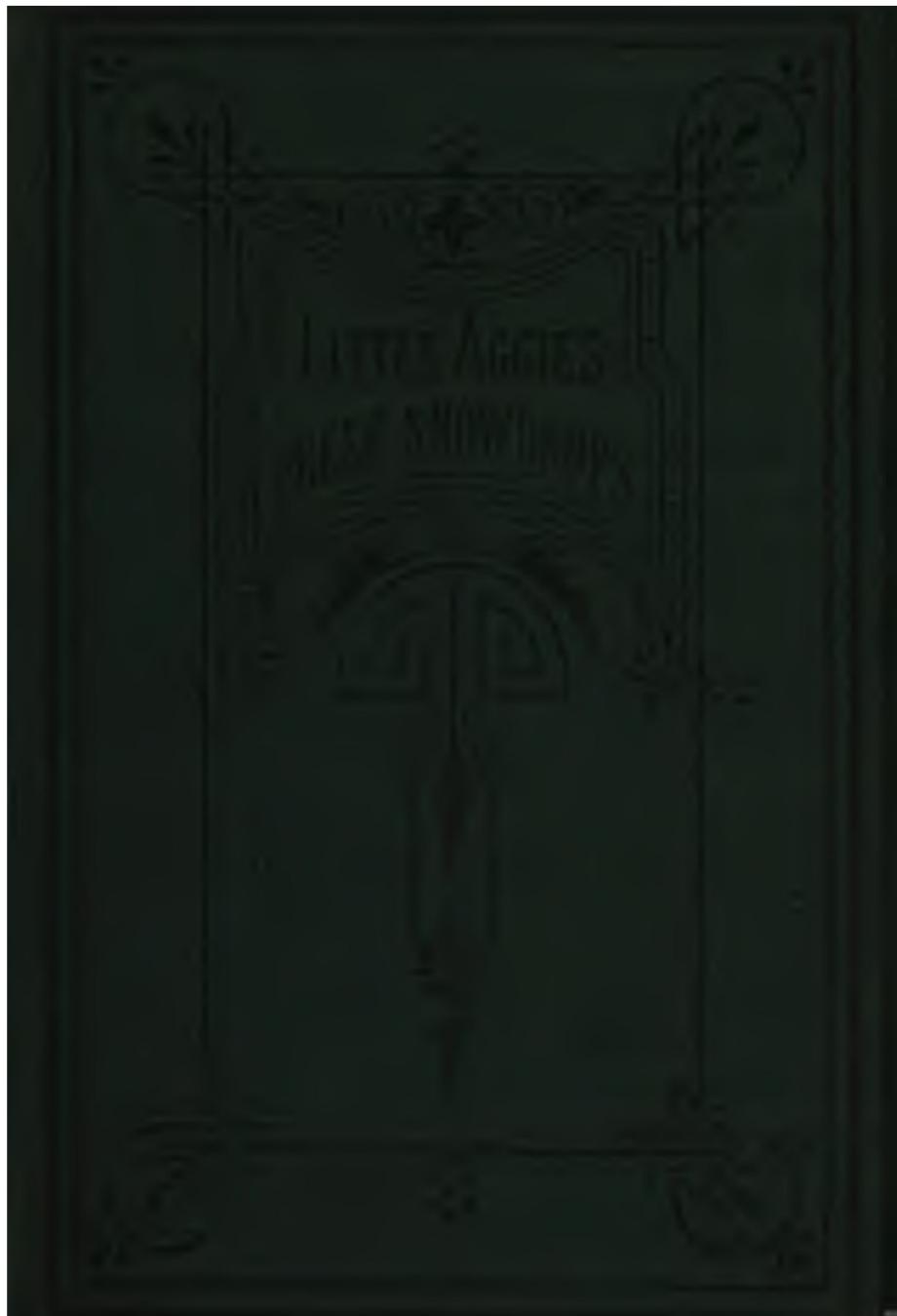
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>











LE AGGIE'S FRESH SNOW-DROPS.

**“ Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, . . .
think on these things.” — PHIL. iv. 8.**

**“ I love the little snow-drop flower,
The first in all the year,
Without a stain upon its leaf,
So snowy white and clear.**

**“ For pure of heart, and innocent,
And teachable, and mild,
And modest in its ways and words.
Should be a Christian child.”**









T. NEILSON AND SONS
LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.





LITTLE AGGIE'S
FRESH SNOWDROPS,

AND

WHAT THEY DID IN ONE DAY.

A Tale for the Young.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"HOPE ON," "KING JACK OF HAYLANDS," &c.



LONDON:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1871.

Contents.

LITTLE AGGIE'S FRESH SNOW-DROPS—

I. Where the Snow-drops came from,	...	...	...	7
II. Snow-drops in the Back-parlour and the Shop Window,	...	...	...	24
III. Snow-drops in the Birth-day Wreath,	...	...	...	40
IV. Where the Snow-drops lay in the Evening,	...	...	...	55

LITTLE VIOLET.	65
-----------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----

THE BLIND CHILD,	112
-------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----





LITTLE AGGIE'S FRESH SNOW-DROPS.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE THE SNOW-DROPS CAME FROM.

WHOM could describe their loveliness as they grew on that woodland bank? The sun shone out with as much warmth as it is in the habit of giving on cold February days, and the snow-drops seemed to think it was high time to come out of their cold damp beds, and tell of the other flowers that were to follow them by-and-by. It was as if they said, "It has been very dull and dreary lately, and you might almost fancy that we were all dead; but here we come, to teach you to be more trustful and hopeful."

about the good things which the future has in store for you."

And there they were, amidst the creeping ivy which was glistening with the damp, the mossy grass, and long waving fern leaves which were still fresh and green in spite of the snow, the frost, and the constant rains of the winter—each snow-drop standing by itself in its spotless, dazzling whiteness, looking most truly as if the snow had left a legacy behind it in the shape of their pure little blossoms.

But it was not on that woodland bank that their lives were to be spent ; for before the sun had been up an hour, and when they were just unclosing their folded petals, they were discovered, and a little hand, red with cold and thin with want, grasped their slight green stalks. It was Aggie, a little girl from the great town about three miles off, and she was very hungry, and so were her baby brothers and sisters, and her poor sick mother had no food to give them for breakfast. So Aggie had got up very early and come over to this wood to gather them, that she might *sell them*, and earn a few pence to get a loaf



GATHERING SNOW-DROPS.

of bread. She had brought Paul, her little brother, with her, more to get him out of mother's way than anything else ; but Paul thought he was very useful in pointing out to Aggie where the snow-drops grew.

To him it was only play; but to his sister, who knew that those white blossoms were to bring food to starving creatures, it was real, life-and-death earnest.

"Stay, Paul, stay," she cried; "you tread on them—yes, I see—they grow thickly up there—stay where you are;" and with nimble feet Aggie sprang up higher on the bank, and gathered them quickly. It was strange to see the eager look on that starved, pinched face as she stretched her cold hand from one flower to another. She was dressed in rags; the large bonnet on her head was her mother's, and almost smothered her pale face; her bones were all distinctly marked, for there was very little flesh to conceal them; and there was an old, care-worn look about her, which would have made one believe it an impossibility that she was only nine years old; but it was true, nevertheless, for it was under the hand of that keenest of sharpeners for the wits—grim poverty—that Aggie had been trained.

"Me tired, Aggie—me tired—me want summat to eat!" cried Paul from the bottom of the bank.



ARRANGING THE SNOW-DROPS.

"Well, I've got enough now," said Aggie, turning round with her pinafore full; "now,

Paul, we'll sit down on this log and settle them." And down she clambered, only stopping to break off some little sprigs from the box-trees which she passed.

"Now, you can help," she said smilingly, showing him her treasures—"you can help to tie them up, Paul ;" and she drew from the bosom of her dress a ball of gray worsted, and set to work. In about half an hour she had a dozen bunches, done up with a piece of the dark green box at the back of each, setting off the whiteness of the snow-drops.

"Come, Paul; now you'll have nice, good breakfast. Come along to the shops, and we'll get some money," she said cheerfully, as she settled her flowers in an old broken basket, and held out her hand to the little boy by her side. And then they got across the brook which bounded the copse, and ran through the fields beyond it until they reached the high road.

For some time Paul got on very well, but by degrees the hardness of the road made his feet ache ; and Aggie, perceiving that he dragged her hand very much, looked at him and saw that he was crying bitterly.

She knew it was hunger that made him cry, for he was generally a brave little fellow, and stopping instantly, she put her arms round him, saying,—

“Don’t cry, Paul; don’t, dear; we’ll soon be back.”

“I do want summat to eat—I do—I do!” sobbed Paul; “and I tired—I sick—Aggie, I so sick.”

Poor Aggie was tired too, but she did not think of herself; she laid the basket on the ground and took the heavy boy in her arms, wrapped her ragged shawl round him, and then gave him the snow-drops to hold, while she staggered on under his weight; but though the little girl’s arms and back ached, and though she could only breathe with difficulty under her heavy burden, no word of discontent passed her lips, but with cheering patient words she brightened her brother’s face, until at length he said he was rested and would “walk a bit.” At last they had reached the great town, and were walking through the crowded, bustling streets. What had been moisture in the woods, glistening on the leaves, and moss,



SELLING THE SNOW-DROPS.

and ferns, and hanging in drops from the flowers, was mud in the city, where it was

mixed with dirt and dust ; and the snow-drops looked purer than ever when contrasted with the blackness and grimness of the things around them.

“ Fresh snow-drops, two bunches for three half-pence,” said Aggie, popping her head into a large fruiterer’s shop, and holding out her basket.

“ You’re too late—we have plenty for to-day—be off with you !” said the shop-keeper gruffly, and Aggie withdrew with a disappointed face.

“ Look, Aggie, what good buns,” said little Paul, pointing to a stand at the door of a shop, which was spread with very tempting ones. “ Me’d like one so much.”

Aggie thought she would too. No one was standing by the buns ; she could easily slip a couple under her shawl ; and she drew near to them for the purpose, when suddenly there rushed into her mind the thought, “ God says, ‘ Thou shalt not steal ;’ ” and she pulled Paul on.

“ Why didn’t you take one ?” he asked fretfully.

“ Because it would have been naughty,

Paul. We mustn't take what isn't ours."

"Why not?—we hungry," said little Paul, looking up with tearful eyes.

"Yes; but God will take care of us," said Aggie, bravely trying to force her own quivering lips into a smile. "Don't you know, Paul, mother made us pray, before we went out, to our Father up in heaven, 'to give us this day our daily bread?' and if we steal it, it isn't his giving it, is it?"

"No," said Paul; "but I think he's forgot."

"No, no, he hasn't; because it was he put the thought about the snow-drops into my head this morning, and it was he made 'em grow, and he'll make the people buy 'em too;" and Aggie paused to hold out a bunch to a young lady who was passing and say, "Fresh snow-drops, miss—so fresh; only picked this morning."

"I don't want them," said the young lady; but she smiled as she spoke, and Aggie liked that smile almost as much as if she had bought her flowers; it seemed to help her to go on; it was an encouragement and a

ray of comfort to her poor little aching heart. Why do not people oftener smile ? Into this cold, working, matter-of-fact world smiles help to bring light and love ; it may be only one spark, but is not a spark better than nothing to a heart that were otherwise in darkness ? But Aggie was too late that morning. Though she wandered wearily up and down the streets, no one seemed to want her snow-drops ; all the shops seemed to be supplied ; and her hopes began to die away, her cheeks to become paler and more wan ; and her little brother was crying piteously for food.

“ Kind gentlemen, do buy my fresh snow-drops !—fresh snow-drops—quite fresh !” she said earnestly, as a party of young men came gaily along the street ; but they took no notice, except to brush rudely past her ; and in so doing they upset her basket, and in an instant the pure white blossoms were lying on the dirty wet pavement.

Aggie did not scream, she only sat down mournfully on a step close by, and, covering her face with her hands, burst into tears, while Paul picked up the flowers. Alas !



THE MISHAP.

they were no longer white; every bunch had some in it which were quite spoiled; and all Aggie's hopes of their procuring a

breakfast for the hungry ones at home were quite at an end.

"What's the matter, little one?—what's all this crying about?" said a kindly voice beside her.

"These gemmen—if they calls themselves such—knocked over her basket, and her snow-drops fell in the mud," said a good-natured boy, helping Paul to pick them up.

"They're spoilt!—they're spoilt!" sobbed Aggie; "and we shall have no breakfast."

"Poor child, you look as if you wanted it too," said the woman who had first spoken. "Are the snow-drops quite spoilt?"

"Yes; every bunch has some dirt on it, and some of 'em got trampled on," replied the little girl, with a fresh burst of tears.

"Well; but all the flowers aren't spoiled. Look, my dear, some of them have only got a little spot on one or two of the blossoms, the middle ones are clean; and they're the freshest, nicest snow-drops I've seen to-day."

Aggie looked up more brightly. The good woman spoke so kindly, and her face was so pleasant, it quite comforted her; and her tears went away altogether when her



THE BIG LOAF.

new friend drew a bright sixpence from her pocket and said,—

“Here, my dear; two of these bunches are quite good for nothing; but I’ll give you this for the rest, if you like.”

There is no need to tell how gratefully

Aggie took the offer ; and then she and Paul put the soiled snow-drops back into the basket, knowing that the little ones at home would delight in them.

A few minutes after they were in a baker's shop buying a big loaf ; and then they set off at a quick run towards the house, where they were so eagerly expected.

" Paul," said Aggie, as they trotted along, " I told you God would take care of us ; mother said he would : we prayed for bread, and look at the big loaf he's given us."

" If I was a growed-up man, Aggie, I'd get cake, not bread—cake, like what's in the windows."

" I think bread's very good," said Aggie contentedly, as she hugged the big loaf closer to her.

" If we'd lots of money we'd be quite happy," said little Paul musingly.

" No, not *quite*," said Aggie, laying emphasis on the last word, as if she knew it would go a long way towards making them so.

" Not quite, you know, Paul, unless daddy had come back from sea ; it's that makes mother look so sad and pale ; it's thinking

of him makes her start and shiver when the wind howls against the window. Oh, I wish, I wish he'd come ! ' He don't know how hungry we are."

They had reached the narrow court where they lived by this time, and entered the dingy lodging-house, the top rooms of which they occupied, and with way-sore and weary feet were toiling up the steep stairs.

"Mother, here's bread — here's a loaf !" cried little Aggie, bursting into their room. " We shan't starve now !" But before she could say another word, she was clasped in a strong pair of arms ; a loving, hearty voice was saying, " My little brave lass ! God bless her !" and Aggie's cheek was covered with her father's kisses.

The ship had come that morning into port, and he had been paid off ; so here he was, with money enough to save them all from beggary.

" Come, Aggie, child, get me some breakfast ; I'm hungry," he exclaimed, after he had jumped Paul nearly up to the ceiling, and brought the colour back into his pale cheeks ; and afterwards they all declared that bread



"MY LITTLE BRAVE LASS!"

had never tasted so good before as that which had been bought with Aggie's snow-drops!



CHAPTER II.

SNOW-DROPS IN THE BACK-PARLOUR AND THE SHOP WINDOW.

AVING brought our little Aggie into smooth waters, let us follow her snow-drops to their new abode. The good-natured woman who had bought them kept a green-grocer's shop in a retired street at some little distance, but she walked briskly and soon reached it.

"Susan," she said cheerfully, as she entered the door, "hasn't Billy taken those potatoes to No. 9?—he must run directly; and you must bide there a few minutes longer."

"O mother," answered the little girl behind the counter, "Jamie's so fretful this morning; he says his side is so bad, and he's crying so dreadful."

"Poor little man!—well, I'll go and see if I can't comfort him a bit," answered his mother, while a sad shade crossed her brow at the mention of her little, suffering, crippled boy; and then she entered the back-parlour behind the shop.

A boy of about eleven years old was sitting in a low chair by the fire; his face was thin and pale, and he was very much deformed.

"Come, Jamie, man, what's the matter?" said his mother, in her own bright, cheery voice, as she came to his side.

A long fit of sobbing was the little boy's only answer.

"Jamie, love, this mustn't be; tell mammy what it is," she said tenderly, as she knelt down by him.

"Oh, the pain, the pain! and I'm so tired;" and the little pale face rested on her shoulder.

"Well, Jamie, it'll make it worse to cry," said his mother, folding her arms round him, and stroking his fair hair. "That's not all that's the matter, my boy; you don't often cry for pain, laddie."



JAMIE AND HIS MOTHER.

"It isn't only pain," he sobbed ; "but, (mother, Billy's been talking to me."

"And how has he vexed you, my boy?"

"He says—O mother!—he says that yo spend all your money on the doctor for me.

"Shame, shame!" said his mother; "he should know better than to say such things."

"And, mother, I'm so useless; I waste all your money, they say; and yet I do nothing at all to help you."

"Yes, you do, my child, when you're bright and happy."

"Oh, I wish, I *wish* God would let me die," sobbed the little fellow.

"Hush, hush, Jamie love," said his mother, as she drew him closely to her: "hush; God won't be pleased to hear his little child speak so fretfully."

"I'm not fretful," said Jamie.

"Just a little bit, I think, dear," whispered his mother. "Is it because you love the Lord Jesus so much that you want to be with him up in heaven?—is that why you want to die?"

"No," he answered, in low, ashamed tones; "it's because I'm tired, and don't like all this pain."

"And yet it's God sends the pain, my darling. So it is a little fretful to cry out about it so much, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Will you ask him to make you patient till his time comes for taking you to the happy home, where you'll be strong and well?"

"Yes, mother."

"There's my own dear boy ; and now you are going to do some work for me. Look at these snow-drops in my basket ; now I want you to take out all the dirty ones, and tie the clean ones up again with some fresh green ; that'll be useful, and then I can sell them, and you'll have earned some money for me."

Jamie's face brightened, and he watched eagerly while his mother drew his little chair up to the table, and laid the basket, some twine, and a pair of scissors before him.

"Oh, the pretty things, mother ! what beauties they are ! Where did you get 'em ?"

Then his mother told him their story, and how they had purchased a breakfast for the poor little children ; and Jamie looked up thoughtfully from his work of sorting the stained flowers, and said,—

"Mother, they're worse off than me ; I had some breakfast."

"Yes, dear ; thank God you had. Now

I must go to the shop, and you'll be a good, patient little lad, won't you?"

"Yes, mother; and may I have the snow-drops I pick out, because some of them's white still?"

"You may, dear, and put them in your mug with 'James' on it."

And then the little lame boy was left alone with the snow-drops.

Quickly and skilfully his small thin fingers sorted them and tied them up afresh, while his eyes, tired with crying, were refreshed with the sight of their pure whiteness; but his work was finished before long, and then he sat with his little elbows resting on the table, looking at the bunches of flowers, and wondering at their beauty.

"I wonder why God made the snow-drops," he said to himself at last; "it must have been a great deal of trouble. I wonder what's the good of them?"

"To brighten us all up by the sight of 'em, to be sure," said his sister Susan, who had just come into the room, and heard what he was saying, and then she ran up-stairs with her duster.

Jamie gave a sigh as he heard her bounding step, but her words seemed quite to answer his question. "They don't do any good, and yet God thought it worth while to make them just for people to look at : well then, perhaps he thought it worth while to make me for that also. Yet I can't be for them to look at, because I'm a hunchback and it wouldn't do 'em a bit of good to see me ; though I don't know : mother says it cheers her up when I've got a bright face and a cheery smile. I know what I'll do I'll ask God, who has made the snow-drops to make me of some use too. Oh, I wish I were pure and white like them ! If ever I'm like them at all, I shall only be a poor little dirty one : well, even they are little bright things to me in my mug, and I know what can make my heart as pure as the pures of them ; I'll ask for that."

And little Jamie prayed to his Father in heaven, and asked to be shown how he might be useful, and patient, and do his work, and that his heart might be washed from all its sins, and made pure in the blood of the Saviour.

When his mother came in, she found him

sitting quietly at the table, reading one of his little books, and he greeted her with a bright smile. She praised his nosegays, pulled out two or three very pure blossoms, and put them into his mug, and then went back into the shop, asking him to have an eye to his little sisters, Jane and Bessie, when they came in from the infant-school, whither Billy had gone to fetch them.

They soon arrived, with their little cheeks glowing with the quick run, and their little tongues going very fast indeed. Jamie would rather have been left alone and in quiet; he was a thoughtful little fellow, and his ill health made him even more so than boys of his age generally are, and he liked nothing better than to be left alone, to think and read, and fancy things for himself; but this was not the usefulness which he longed for that morning, and the snow-drops doing their lowly work of brightening others, had taught him a lesson.

"Hush, Jenny," said little Bessie, pulling her sister into a far corner of the room. "Billy says Jamie's as cross as the cats this morning; let's play with dolly over here."

Jamie heard the words, and they made him even more unhappy than he had been before; but he did not speak, he only watched the two little girls at their whispered play, and sighed to think how much they feared and disliked him. For some time the game went on merrily enough ; but then Jamie heard a cry of anger come from Bessie, and, looking up to discover the cause, he saw that Jenny was trying to pull the doll away from her by force, and that its arm had been broken off in the fray. Bessie's first thought was to revenge the doll's fracture by dealing vigorous blows on Jenny's head ; but then real sorrow for her dear dolly became mixed with her anger, and she sat down with it in her arms, and cried most piteously. On other days, Jamie would have spoken pettishly, and told her to be quiet ; but he remembered his wish to be useful, and so he said, gently and kindly,—

“ What's the matter, little woman ? ”

“ Naughty Jenny b'oke my doll ! Me 'ill beat her, and me 'ill tell mother ; me 'ill.”

At this Jenny began to whimper, and Jamie to fear that he could not give much

Edith the delights of the evening that was past. Then Mr. Clifford went over to the window where Mary was sitting with her wreath in her hand, looking very disconsolately on its faded blossoms.

"Well, little woman, has this been a pleasant evening?" he said gently, as he laid his hand on her head.

"Yes, papa; pretty well."

"Only *pretty well*?"

Mary shook her head, but did not speak.

Her father stood by her side for a few minutes, expecting her to say something more; but she did not, so he went away to his study.

He had not been there long, before there came a little timid knock at his door, and Mary entered.

"I've come to say good-night, papa." But she did not raise her face to his with its usual merry smile; she only hung down her head, and looked very sad.

"What is the matter, dear Mary?" he said, very gravely, as he put his arm around her. Her only answer was to lay her head down on his shoulder, and burst into tears.



IN THE STUDY.

" You are tired, dear—tired of all the play. Go to bed, and sleep it off. You will be our own little elf again to-morrow

"No, no, papa ; it isn't that."

"Well, what is it, then ?"

"I don't like only to have this wreath that withers away, papa. Julia Desmond told me that *she* wouldn't wear paltry snow-drops, that would die in one evening. Her mamma gave her a lovely wreath on her birth-day, all of white artificial flowers and silver leaves ; and she keeps it now put away in a band-box. And here, you see, mine are only real flowers, and can die. And then, papa, I showed her my presents, and the paint-box you gave me, and the boys' book, and Edith's doll ; and she said that she had been given a much bigger paint-box, and the book was bad print, and that *her* doll's eyes opened and shut ; but she supposed you couldn't afford those kind of things for me. And then she asked me what I had done all day ; and when I told her, she laughed, and said she wondered how I could have pleasure in playing with a little poor child, and that she always went for a drive in the park or something. And, papa, just then Edith came up, and told me that Ellen was waiting for some of my birth-

day cake in the hall ; and I was ashamed Julia should see her, because she was so shabby, and so I said, ‘ Let her wait.’ ”

“ O Mary, I am so sorry.” And her father’s grieved look told even more than his words.

“ Well, papa, it was too vexing.”

“ *What* was too vexing, Mary—Julia’s folly, or your wicked pride ? ”

“ No, papa ; it was all vexing—the wreath and everything.”

“ Your pretty wreath, that pleased you so much ! Mary, I do not think you had any right to wear those snow-drops.”

“ Why not, papa ? ”

“ Because they are humble little flowers, and my little Mary is not humble.”

“ Am I not, papa ? ”

“ No.” And her father spoke sorrowfully, and in a very grave voice.

Mary was silent for a few minutes ; but then, throwing her arms around him, she sobbed out, “ Papa, papa, I see it now ; and that’s what has been making me so unhappy—not the things themselves, but my old wicked pride. No, I was not fit to have

the pretty snow-drops. O papa, how shall I be humble ? ”

“ There is but one way, my darling. Learn from Him who ‘ was meek and lowly in heart,’ and ask him to take the naughty pride from your heart ; and then by-and-by I shall see my little girl, like the snow-drops, ready to take the place which God means for her, and to fill that place in the way that best pleases him, with loving humility. If the dear little white snow-drops can teach my Mary this, I do not think her birth-day wreath will be as perishable as Julia Desmond’s artificial flowers.”

“ What do you mean, dear papa ? Julia’s wreath can never fade.”

“ No ; but the white will soil, and the silver tarnish, and Julia will throw the old wreath away ; while yours, my child, will be an everlasting one ; for if the snow-drops teach you humility and contentment, they will be always blossoming in your heart. Do you understand me, or are you too sleepy ? ”

“ No, papa ; I think I understand.”

“ That’s right. Then let this new year be a wiser and a humbler one than last.”

"I'll try, papa ; and I'll ask to be taught to be more humble. And, papa dear, Ellen shall have all the rest of my birth-day cake."

"I don't know what Charlie and Fred would say to that, dear," said Mr. Clifford, laughing.

Mary coloured. "Very well, papa. Then Ellen shall have all my share, and I will take it to her ; and I will try not to wish for any when I see Charlie and Fred eating theirs."

Mr. Clifford only answered by a loving kiss of approval, and then she went away to bed. When she was gone, he saw two or three of the snow-drops lying on the ground, which had dropped from the birth-day wreath. He took them up, and placed them within the leaves of one of his books ; and years afterwards, when Mary had learned the lessons of humility and contentment much more fully than he had dared to hope she ever would, he showed her the withered blossoms, and said to her gently, "Mary, my child, your snow-drops were everlastings ;" and Mary only smiled in answer, for she knew well what he meant.



CHAPTER IV.

WHERE THE SNOW-DROPS LAY IN THE EVENING.



To know this, we must follow the factory-girl who had bought the last bunch of snow-drops in Mrs. Grey's window. Her name was Alice Mansfield, and her home was in a dark and dingy court. It was but a poor home when she reached it—a lonely room, up four pair of stairs; and Alice often thought of the happy country home which she had been obliged to leave, and longed for one breath of country air, or one glance at a country scene.

But this evening she had put away her gloomy thoughts, and was looking forward to a pleasure which she was going to give some one else.

When she had hung up her bonnet and

shawl, she carried her bunch of snow-drops to the room next her own, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," said a mournful voice; and she entered the room.

It was more comfortable than her own. There were marks in it which seemed to betoken that its owners had known better times. A woman, in a widow's cap, and whose face bore marks of anxiety, sorrow, and want, was sitting beside a bed, where a little boy of about nine years old was lying. His small face was wasted and pale, save for a bright and burning spot on each of his cheeks; his breathing was hurried and difficult; his thin hands were stretched beside him; his dark brown hair strayed over the pillow; and his large eyes gleamed with a lustrous light, though the dulness of death was already coming upon them. A faint smile came upon his lips as he caught sight of Alice in the doorway, and his whole face brightened as she brought the snow-drops to his side.

"Thank you—oh, thank you," he whispered. "Will you put them in water?"



THE SICK-BED.

"Yes. Where is your glass?"

His mother brought it, and Alice wondered at the calm of her face: she did not know that it was sent from heaven.

"How is he?" whispered Alice, as the mother came near.

"Worse. This is the last I may have of him," she answered. "Mr. Clifford has been here, praying beside him."

"Alice, stoop down," said little Willie suddenly.

She obeyed.

"I love those flowers. They are beautiful. They're like what Mr. Clifford has been telling me."

"What's that, Willie?"

"Those who have washed their robes—go on, mother."

And she took up his words, and added softly, "'And made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God.'"

"Yes; that's it," said Willie. "Jesus has washed mine, and so now I'm going up to him; and I love those flowers because they mind me of him. Mother, sing to me. Sing 'Around the throne.'"

In a trembling voice the poor mother complied; and Alice sat and listened, and tears rolled down her cheeks as she did so. She had no friends except little Willie and his mother in that great city; and now

lie was going away from her, and there
a great feeling of loneliness in her
t. Ever since she had known him, it
been something to which she could look
ard during her hard day's work—those
sant evening visits to Mrs. Elder's room,
Willie's sick-bed ; and she was always
riving little pleasures of some kind for

The little boy was very fond of her ;
his mother loved her for her good-
ure and kindness to him.

nd now, as Alice looked at the fair
ll face, on which Death's hand was busy,
heart sank down at the thought of part-
with him ; for she knew but little of the
to which he was going.

Alice, don't ye cry," said Willie feebly,
g his thin hand on hers. "Don't cry
use I'm going away ; and you'll come
won't you, with mother ? and I'll watch
e gate for you."

O Willie, Willie, don't go ! " sobbed poor
e, while tears ran down her rough face.
I must, Alice ; because *He's* calling,"
a smile of beaming joy passed over the
of the little boy ; "and I'm 'to walk

with him in white.' O Alice, it's a happy!"

Alice's tears fell faster, and she feared she might distress him; so, asking his mother to call her if she wanted her, she stooped down and kissed the little face she loved so well, saying, "Good-night, dear Willie."

"Good-night," he whispered. "Think of me when you see the snow-drops—I love them so. And don't grieve, Alice, because I'm 'walking with Him in white.'"

"Good-night." And then she went down to her own little room, and prayed to the Saviour,—prayed as she had not done for years, and rose strengthened and calmed. Then, wearied out by hard work and grief of heart, she lay down and slept heavily.

About midnight she was waked by hearing Mrs. Elder's voice beside her. "Come up and see him," she whispered—"come and see what is left of him; for he himself 'walking in white before the throne of God.'" The mother's heart was wrung with sorrow too deep for words, and silently she led the way into her room.

There lay the little boy as if asleep. H



ALICE AT PRAYER.

eyes were closed, his breathing had ceased, a smile was on his white lips, and the snow-drops were lying on his breast, with his thin hands clasped upon them.

“ Those snow-drops were the last pleasure he had, Alice. He smiled on them the last thing,” said his mother.



THE DEATH-BED.

"O Mrs. Elder, he looks like a verse I learned long ago at school: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'"

"He sees God now," said the mother.
"But oh, Alice, I'm lonely. I've no child."

"Let me be your daughter," said Alice tenderly. "Do let me."

"Yes, my child. You loved my Willie, and you will love me."

"I will—I do! Oh, if I could but comfort you?"

"God will do that," said the mother, looking tenderly down on little Willie; and then she added, "He only can."

And now the snow-drops' day was ended. The darkness of night was spread like a mantle over the city, and over the wood where they had grown in the morning. The work of the little white flowers was done; they had cheered, brightened, and comforted some of the toiling children of earth; they had lighted up dark places, and brought thoughts of peace and joy to sorrowful hearts; they had reminded some of the better hope beyond them, of the purity of "the land which is very far off," and the happiness of those who have put off their earth-stained dresses, and to whom the words

64 WHERE THE SNOW-DROPS LAY IN TH

of promise are fulfilled, "They s
with me in white, for they are wo

Was it then for nothing that
the snow-drops ?



—
LITTLE VIOLET.







LITTLE VIOLET.

CHAPTER I.

H, how very dull it was ! The poor little girl had to lie in bed all day, because she had taken a bad cold, and her mamma said that was the only way to get rid of it. She had counted all the folds of the curtains—she had examined every turn of the green twisting pattern of the paper on the wall. She had looked at the little ornaments on the mantelpiece until they seemed to turn into all manner of different forms—she had drunk her mutton-broth, and had *not* obeyed her old nurse's orders to keep her hands under the bed-clothes, for she had been playing with her pillow until her arms ached, and

now her head ached too ; her eyes were tired, and she wished very much that she had something to amuse her.

Poor little Violet ! How glad she was when she heard a quick bounding step on the stairs, and her sister Ellen came in to see how the little prisoner was getting on.

"O Ellen, I'm so glad—it *is* so dull!"

"Of course it is, you poor little thing," said kind, bright Ellen, as she threw herself on to the end of the bed, tossing off her little black hat, and shaking back the curls from her merry face.

"And you look *so* happy," said Violet, very mournfully.

"I've got no cold," Ellen replied rather mischievously.

"Well, I can't help mine."

"No, I never said you could ; but really, Violet, I'm very sorry, for Aunt Charlotte has sent over to ask us to tea to-night, and mamma says you can't go."

Violet's face grew very long.

"Who's going ?" she asked in a dismal tone.

"Papa and mamma, and Francis and I."

Tom has got to stay at home and study to-night."

"Oh dear!"

"I'm so sorry. Shall I stop at home with you?" said Ellen in a half hesitating way, which showed the strong effort it was to her to make such a proposal.

"Oh no, no, no!" and Violet shook her head very decidedly.

"Well, I'll lend you 'Cheerful Annie,' or some of my books."

"No, not that, because I don't feel cheerful at all."

"All the more reason why you should want it—it's beautiful, *I* think."

"Is it?" but Violet turned her head round quickly, and Ellen did not see that tears were falling on the soft, white pillow; she only noticed that her sister was very quiet, and thinking she was sleepy, she got off the bed, drew the curtain across the window, and left the little girl alone.

Then Violet had a regular fit of crying over her disappointment, and made her eyes ache more than ever, and thought Ellen need hardly have come up to tantalize her

with the thought of the pleasure which she was not to share; and rather hard thoughts about Ellen passed through the little maiden's mind, as she wondered if she had told her on purpose to tease her.

Presently her mamma came in to see her, and that cheered the little girl directly, for the touch of *mamma's* hand on her aching forehead, the pleasant way in which mamma settled the pillow and smoothed the clothes, and the kind, cheerful tones of mamma's sweet voice, could not fail to do good to her little daughter.

But *mamma's* quick eye was not long in discovering that something had been fretting Violet, and she asked what it was.

"Only—only," and Violet choked down a sob, "it's so dull, and I want to go to Aunt Charlotte's to-night."

"That is impossible, love; but you will only make those poor eyes more burning and uncomfortable if you cry about it."

"But, mamma, Cousin Charlie is to be there and show his conjuring tricks."

"Well, some night he will come to us and show them also."

"It's so horrid lying up here all day," grumbled Violet.

"Well, my child, we all know that colds are not pleasant things; but the only thing to cure them is patience, to be taken in large doses."

Violet smiled. "Mamma, I think patience is a most horrid dose; it doesn't agree with me, I'm certain."

Mrs. Thornton shook her head. "You don't agree with it yet, my little girl; but before you have done with it, you will get to like it."

"Have you, mamma?"

"Yes, darling."

"But isn't it much *pleasanter* to make a great fuss, and toss about, and cry, and all that, when you don't like a thing, than to lie still and be *patient*?"

"I don't find it so now, Violet; it is better to let patience have her perfect work;" and with these words Mrs. Thornton stooped down and kissed the little girl's cheek. Violet looked into that calm, sweet face—with the lines of sorrow traced upon it—and wondered if anybody in all the world was as good as her mamma.

" You are better to-night, dear ; I think your stay in Bedfordshire has done you good," Mrs. Thornton said after a moment or two, as she stroked Violet's dark hair back from her forehead.

" Oh yes, mamma, I'm much better ; and I do so want to get up."

" Well, supposing I say that you may get up and come down to the library to make tea for Tom to-night, will you sit very quiet while he studies ?"

" Oh, you dear, good mamma, I am so glad ! To be sure I will be quiet, like a little mouse ; and Ellen has promised to lend me her new book."

" Very well, then, my child, I will send nurse to you ; but you must not sit up very late. Now I must go and get ready ; good-night, dear Violet."

Soon after the whole party had gone, a funny little figure, well wrapped up, came into the library, where a bright clear fire was burning, and Tom Thornton was up to his elbows in large books, with his fingers *run through* his hair, and one hand supporting his forehead ; the position which Violet

knew always meant that he was at something more difficult than usual.

But intent as he was upon his work, no sooner did the young student see his little sister coming into the room than he rose, and coming forward, said cheerily, "Well, Mouse, so you've come to spend the evening with me. How's the cold?"

"Better," croaked Violet in a very hoarse voice, but she returned Tom's kiss warmly; and then as he pulled a comfortable arm-chair up to the fire for her, and brought the little table to her side, she coiled herself up, and put her feet on the fender.

"Now, Tom, I've promised mamma not to disturb you, and so I'll be very quiet indeed, while you go back to those big stupid-looking books."

"Poor little Mouse; well, I will work on until tea-time, and then I'll be at your service for a game of chess, or anything else you like."

"Oh, thank you, good old Tom; and I'll look into the fire and build castles in the air until the urn comes."

"Or look here, will this do better? I got

them on my way home to-night, and this little white jug for you to put them in ;" and Tom placed a bunch of purple violets on the little table beside her.

" O Tom, for me ? and this dear little white Parian jug—what made you think of it ?"

" Well, it was natural that the sight of the little things should remind me of the poor small Violet we had got shut up at home, and so it was not such a very extraordinary thing that, having some coppers in my pocket, I should exchange them for this little bunch to brighten you up. There now, I must go back to work, and you do your best to fill your jug."

So Tom returned to his books ; and Violet's fingers were very busy arranging her little purple namesakes, delighting herself in their delicious perfume, their rich colour, and soft green leaves. And when every violet was in its proper place, and the water was put in, and the ends of the stalks thrown into the fire, the little girl leaned back in her chair and looked at her work with great satisfaction.

While she was thinking of many things connected with them, she was startled by the entrance of the servant with tea ; she could hardly believe that it was an hour since she came down, and as Tom shut his books with a good decided bang, which told that his work was finished for the present, she looked up joyfully, saying,—

“ Tom, I’m glad I couldn’t go to Aunt Charlotte’s; you’d have been very dull without me.”

Tom did not tell her that, had it not been for her, he should have gone to Aunt Charlotte’s as soon as he had finished his work ; he only smiled at her across the table, admired her violets, and piled up all his books.

Tea went on very merrily, and when it was finished, Tom got out the chess-board, and they soon were deeply engaged in a game. But Violet’s brain was not very clear, and she made such desperate mistakes that she was soon beaten ; and then, with a great yawn, she declared that she could not play any more.

“ No, I don’t think you can,” said Tom kindly.

" Well, now then, Tom, draw your chair near the fire, and let's have a talk ; it isn't often I get you all to myself, and I want to ask you so many things."

" Well," said her brother, pretending to look like an oracle, as he seized the poker and began vigorously to stir the fire, " what's the first ?"

" Well, I've been thinking what an odd thing it was to call me Violet. It never struck me until to-night. What made them do it ?"

A sad shade passed over Tom's face as he answered, " It was Rose's wish."

" Poor Rose that died just after I was born ?"

" Yes ; she was very ill when you were born, and when papa asked her what she would like you to be called, she answered, ' I should like you to have a Violet when your Rose is dead ;' and papa said it should be so, especially as every one declared your eyes were violet, which they aren't, you know, one single bit."

" No ; gray green is what Francis calls them ; but, Tom—"

“ Well ?”

“ I’m not like a violet any way.”

“ How now ; what odd fancy is coming up now ?” said Tom, laughing.

“ Don’t laugh, Tom ; but I’ve been thinking names should suit, and all the rest do, and mine doesn’t.”

“ What *do* you mean ?”

“ Why, you’re *Tom*; any one would know that, there’s something so kind and strong and jolly about the name.”

“ Don’t talk slang, *Violet*, ” said her brother, shaking his head with an air of mock gravity.

“ And then there’s *Ellen*, ” she continued, unheeding his interruption. “ She’s so bright and merry, her name’s just right ; and *Francis*, free and mischievous—but shrewd; and *Rose*, so beautiful and pure and loved by every one, and dying away like the flower; but I’m not a bit like my name, I ought to be very beautiful, and shy, and have people come to search for me like some great treasure.”

“ You queer little thing,” said Tom, looking round into her demure little face.

"No, Tom, now you're laughing, and I'm quite grave ; I mean it."

"Well, shall I tell you what *I* think about it ?"

"Yes."

"My idea of your little namesake flower is different from yours. I always fancy it more like a little German rhyme which I am very fond of—

'Learn from it with pure endeavour,
Good to do, and nothing say.'

The law of the violet seems to me to be, to do as much good as possible in the little space appointed to it."

Violet bent forward, her eyes full of eager excitement ; and Tom, seeing her look of pleasure, went on.

"When one comes near a bank of violets, one perceives it long before one has discovered the flowers, from the delicious smell ; and there are some people who are always doing little kind actions and thoughtful things for others, like mamma for instance, that seem to do good in the same way."

"O Tom, I see, I see—go on !"

"I haven't much more to say, Violet,"

said the young man gravely ; “only there’s one other thought comes to me of the little flower glorifying its Maker by its life of gladness, that purple glowing colour, and that delicious fragrance doing their work and fulfilling the exact mission for which they were made, with—

‘A work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom they wait.’

Am I too fanciful for you ? ”

Violet’s eyes were glistening with pleasure.

“No, no ; those lines were from the hymn you like so much ; I shall learn it by next Sunday.”

Tom was gazing thoughtfully into the fire, and hardly heeded her words.

“Violet,” he said after a few moments’ pause, “I have not been saying my own words to you, I have only been going over a talk I once had about those flowers with Rose.”

Violet knew how he had loved this dead sister, and how seldom he mentioned her to any one, so she only showed her sympathy by laying her hand on his and whispering, “I should like to be the kind of Violet *she* would have had me.”

"Yes, *do*," said Tom heartily ; and then looking up at the little white-faced clock which was ticking away on the mantelpiece, he added, "It wants half an hour to prayer-time ; shall I read you Sir Walter Scott's '*Lady of the Lake*' for a little while ?"

Violet eagerly assented, and the time passed quickly away in this pleasant occupation. At half-past nine the servants came in, and Tom read a chapter from the Bible. His little sister liked to listen to his grave, sweet voice, and she thought that he was thinking of the violet work when he chose for their evening portion the chapter which describes that "*charity that seeketh not her own.*"

She went to bed directly prayers was over, but as she bade Tom good-night, she whispered, "*I shan't forget ; I've been so happy, Tom.*"





CHAPTER II.

WEEK passed away, during which time Violet lost her cold, and had made some advance in her newly discovered work.

Tom found a pair of gloves, that he had left in holes, neatly mended and laid beside his hat on the hall-table.

Mr. Thornton, when he returned from his afternoon round of visits to his patients (for he was a medical man), was greeted in his study by the sight of a blazing fire, and his slippers toasting before it.

Francis, who was rigging a small ship, was delighted by finding a new sail which Ellen had promised to make for him, and as usual had forgotten, lying with his tools—of exactly the shape and size which he required—and could not imagine who had put it there.

idea of the long piece of work she would have to do, and the hour that would be taken from her play-time for the purpose.

As they were taking off their things on their return, Violet said, "Ellen, wouldn't it be better to mend your frock now, and have it done?"

"Very well," said Ellen; "and will you read a story to me while I do it?"

Violet would rather have gone back to her comfortable arm-chair and her own book, but on second thoughts she changed her mind, and having found a story, sat down beside her sister, and began reading; while Ellen, after a long hunt, discovered her needle and cotton, and set to work upon the unfortunate frock.

But both sisters started up in a few minutes as their ear caught the sound of carriage-wheels coming up to the door.

"It's Uncle Temple, and Ronald is with him; oh, joy, joy!" cried Violet, throwing down her book and running out of the room.

Ellen quickly followed her, and they met their uncle and the sailor cousin, who had just returned from his first voyage, in the hall.

"Well, little nieces, you see I've brought

Ronald to see you ; is he grown out of all recollection ? Is papa in, or mamma ? ”

“ Yes, in the drawing-room,” said Ellen, leading the way, while Violet and Ronald followed more slowly, Violet looking half-shyly, but with very admiring eyes, upon her cousin’s midshipman dress, and his bronzed face.

“ Well, Miss Violet, you’ll know me again,” he said, laughing.

“ I was looking to see if I did know you,” she answered ; “ but now you laugh, you’re just the same as ever.”

“ And I suppose you are as idle and mischievous as you can be,” said Ronald.

“ Not quite,” Violet replied, shaking her head. “ I dare say you’ve had heaps of adventures.”

“ Loads ; I’ll tell you all about them. And papa’s come over to bring you and Ellen and Francis back to the rectory to stay till Monday.”

“ Oh, what fun, what fun ! ” cried Violet.

“ Ellen, do you hear ? we are to go back to the rectory to spend Ronald’s first Sunday at home.”

"Oh, then I must go and finish my frock!" said Ellen, but somehow she did not go, and minute after minute slipped by, and Ronald's stories grew more and more entertaining, and Ellen forgot all about the mending.

At last her uncle turned round and said, "Ellen, my dear, your mamma says you and Francis and Violet may come over till Monday; will you run and get ready?"

Ellen started to her feet. "Oh, my frock, my frock!" she thought; "and it's such a long tear! why, I never shall have done it; and if mamma knows it is torn, she will not let me go in this old brown one. Where can Violet be? oh, she might come and help me!" and she sprang up the stairs two steps at a time, until she had reached their room. There she found Violet quietly locking the little bag into which nurse had packed their things, and the blue dress lay on the bed.

"O Violet, Violet, what *shall* I do? that horrid dress—where is my cotton? quick, quick, I will cobble it up some way."

Violet smiled, and the next moment Ellen discovered the rent neatly mended, and the dress all ready to be worn.

"Oh, you dear, good little thing, did you give it to nurse ? was that what you slipped away from Ronald's stories for ? they were such fun I *could* not come ; I must run and thank nurse."

"*I* did it," said Violet, colouring very much.

"*You!* why you never mean to say you've darned it all like this ! O Violet, what a pet you are !" and Ellen threw her arms round her sister's neck, and gave her a hearty kiss ; and Violet felt very glad in her heart.





CHAPTER III.

TE must not linger over the pleasant Sunday the children spent at their uncle's rectory, which was about four miles out of the town.

Ronald was an only son, and the joy and delight of that quiet home, so that his return was the signal for universal gladness : his cousins were like brothers and sisters to him, and until they came over to share in the rejoicings he did not feel that it was a proper home-coming. But it would make our story too long to dwell on their happiness, so we must hasten over the next two days and join them in the dining-room at home on the Monday evening.

Violet was giving Tom an account of a class of very small children which her uncle had given her to teach, and Francis was

hard at work upon his ship, making some improvements which Ronald had suggested.

At last Mr. Thornton joined them, looking very weary, and as if something had tried him. He threw himself into the arm-chair, stroked Violet's hair, and then gazed silently and thoughtfully into her face.

"What's the matter, papa?"

"I was thinking what a dreadful thing it is to see a little child suffer pain," replied her father gravely. "I have been visiting a little boy this afternoon who can never move from his couch except to be carried to bed. I do not think he can live *very* long, but even if he does he will always live in pain. His parents are not rich enough to give him many necessary things. His mother has to teach music all day, and his father is engaged in an office in the city; so that poor little Edward, who has no brothers or sisters, is entirely left to the charge of a servant maid. When I went in to-day, I found him crying from loneliness and pain; and when I asked why he cried he answered, 'I can't help it; I've got nothing else to do.'"

"O papa," cried Ellen, "mayn't we lend him some picture-books and things?"

Mr. Thornton smiled. "Yes, you shall, dear, if you like it."

"And mayn't we go to see him?" she added eagerly.

"Yes, certainly; that will do him more good than anything," said her father kindly.

Accordingly, on the following day, Mr. Thornton took the two little girls with him to visit little Edward Sharpe; and they brought him out of their stores a picture-book and a puzzle, with some oranges as a present from mamma.

Edward was shy at first, but this soon wore off, and he greatly enjoyed their visit. For a few days Ellen went regularly to see him, as the house where he lived was close to their home; but by degrees her visits became fewer and far between, and at length ceased altogether. She began to find it harder work than she had thought to give up so many of her play-hours to visiting a sick boy who required to be constantly amused, and who was very fretful and restless sometimes.

Poor little Edward missed her very much the first day that she did not come ; but on the second day, instead of Miss Ellen, Miss Violet came in, bringing a little bunch of flowers for him.

" I've brought a story book too ; shall I read to you a little bit ? " she said kindly.

" Oh, please," said Edward, his whole face brightening.

So Violet sat, reading to him and trying to soothe his pain, through the long hours of that bright sunshiny afternoon ; she did not tell him that she had given up a pleasant drive with her Aunt Charlotte, that she might come to brighten and cheer him in his loneliness ; but He, for whose sake she did this kind deed, looked with pleasure upon her work, and it did not lose its reward.

" Can you sing ? " said little Edward suddenly, as she laid down the book, having finished the story.

" Yes, I sing enough to amuse myself ; sometimes I sing when I am all by myself."

" Do you think you could sing me something ? I do so love music ; and mother's

piano is down-stairs, so I never hear it; and it seems to make the pain better when I hear some."

"I will try and sing then," said Violet; "what shall it be?"

"Oh, a hymn; something soft."

So Violet went through several of her own favourites, and the look of pain on the little fellow's thin flushed face became less intense, and in some of the last verses he tried to join.

"Thank you," he said, when she stood up to go away. "Please come again; Miss Ellen's very kind, but I like you best."

Violet did not repeat this to Ella, but she went on visiting little Edward whenever she could, and thinking of every little thing she could do, to throw some brightness into his sad life.

She had found plenty of ways now of imitating her little namesake flower, and had

"Learned from it with pure endeavour
Good to do, and nothing say."

Just at this time her old nurse was taken very ill, and Violet found that there were a great many ways in which she could help her mamma to nurse her; and she would sit

for hours with unwearied patience by her bedside, watching to get whatever was wanted, to give her her medicine and food at the right times, and make herself useful as well as she could.

And when old Rachel began to get better, no one was so careful of her or so willing to attend upon her as Miss Violet, and as the old woman herself said, "Not even dear Miss Rose, had she been spared, could have been more kind to me, nor taken more care of me, than that dear bright child ; no, not if she'd been my own daughter, could she have done better for me. The Lord bless her for it !"

Mr. Thornton was very much pleased with his little daughter's thoughtfulness, and declared jokingly on the day that old Rachel came down for the first time that Violet deserved a doctor's fee for making her well, at the same minute laying down half a sovereign on the table before her.

"O papa," she said, blushing violently, "I can't take this. Of course I liked to be with Rachel, and I can't take this money ; please don't."

Mr. Thornton stooped down, parted the hair off her forehead, and kissed her.

"I don't give it you, love, because you have nursed Rachel, but because I am so pleased to see the thoughtful kindness which you have shown lately in so many ways ; you are my own little fireside Violet. Now put your money away into your purse, and do what you like with it."

Violet looked up all radiant with joy at this unlooked for praise, then put the money in safety into her purse, and thought with delight of how much it would further a little scheme which she had in her head.

With quick bounding steps she ran upstairs to her little drawer and counted over her money.

"Fifteen shillings, and papa's ten makes twenty-five ; only five more wanted and then I can get it," she said to herself joyously ; "it will be only a little one, but much better than nothing."

A few days after this, when Violet was busily engaged in the afternoon in practising over a difficult piece of music, Francis suddenly came into the room looking very



VIOLET AND FRANCIS.

much troubled, and almost crying. He took no notice of Violet, only went over towards the window and threw himself into a chair.

After a moment or two he cried out

hastily, "Do stop that now, Violet; for goodness' sake, do."

Violet got up, closed the piano, and went over to him.

"What is it, Francis; what's the matter? do tell me."

A low, half-smothered sob was her brother's only reply, as he hid his face in the window-curtain.

"Francis, please tell me," Violet whispered, bending her face close down to his.

"You won't care; it's nothing to you," he answered in a low husky voice.

"Yes, it is, it must be, if it hurts you; speak to me, Francis."

"Can I trust you? Will you not tell?" he said, hurriedly raising his head for one moment, and gazing earnestly into her face.

"No, I won't tell," said Violet firmly.

"Well, look here: you know the fellows said—that is—they all think I'm so careful and steady and all that, and they make me keep the money for the cricket-club; and I was collecting it yesterday, and like a fool I put it all into my waistcoat pocket, and there's a hole, I've dropped it all—every

halfpenny—and to-morrow it will be wanted, and I've not got it."

"But can't you tell them you've dropped it?" asked Violet, after a minute's silence.

"No; what good will that do? the last fellow that kept it said he'd dropped it, and they all knew he'd spent it."

"But *you* haven't; surely they'll believe *your* words?" said Violet eagerly.

"There's no saying; any way they'll be savage at the money being lost, and I daren't ask papa, because he gave me a pound not long ago."

"How much is it?" asked Violet.

"Twenty-two shillings I've got to make up; thirty it was I lost, but I've got eight of my own. I say, Violet, can you lend me some; I know you've been hoarding?"

A quick thrill of disappointment ran through poor little Violet's mind. If she gave her money to Francis, what would become of her own little cherished scheme? No, no; she could not bear the penalty of his carelessness. No; she could not help him. Then she looked in his miserable face, and watched him eagerly trying to

read her decision, and there came the thought, "Christ pleased not himself," and I want to be like him; it will be for my own pleasure that I keep the money for the purpose for which I have saved it, and though it is to give pleasure to another person as well, I think it must be more *right* for me to help my own brother first.

But it *was* very hard. No one knew the battle that went on in Violet's mind for those few short minutes, before she stooped down and kissed Francis' cheek, whispering, "I can give it to you. I'll run and get it;" and away she went to fetch her cherished hoardings. She returned very quickly, and emptied her little purse on the table. There was papa's bright half-sovereign, two half-crowns from Uncle Temple, and all her own allowances of sixpence a-week, for several weeks back, besides some other coins; she counted out twenty-two shillings, and pushed them over to Francis, who could hardly believe his good fortune.

"Well, Violet, you're first-rate; why, you little miser, how came you by such a hoard? and to have kept it so quiet: but really, I

am very much obliged. There, you see, I don't want it all ; you have three shillings left. I shan't forget it, Violet. I only hope I shall be able to do you a good turn some day ;" and Francis jingled the money in his hand and capered about the room with joy. "I'll go and pay it out to Fraser directly," he cried, "and then it will be safe for this time. Hurrah for you, Violet ! I'll know who to come to in a scrape for the future."

"And please, if you'll leave your waist-coat on the chair up-stairs, I'll mend it," Violet cried after him, as he banged the door behind him.

When he was gone she slowly took up the three shillings that were left, looked at them long and silently, then dropped them into her purse. "I must begin again," she said to herself mournfully ; "I was so near the end, and now I must begin all over again."

Well done, little Violet ! You would not have let Francis see those hot tears of disappointment that were streaming down your cheeks ; perhaps if he had seen them he

would not have gone off in quite such brimming spirits ; but God saw them, and he sent some comfort to your brave little heart.

With her head bent upon the table, and her hands over her eyes, trying vainly to drive away those refractory tears, Violet did not hear a footstep in the room, nor perceive that any one had come in, until a hand was gently laid on her shoulder, and Tom's kind voice said,—

“Violet crying ! why, what's the matter ?”

“Nothing,” sobbed the little girl, but the kind voice of sympathy only made her tears flow the faster.

Tom knelt down beside her and put one arm around her, drawing her head on to his shoulder.

“Don't tell me it is nothing,” he said gently, as he put his hand on her forehead. “Has it anything to say to the good deed you have been doing for Francis ? I have just met him in tearing spirits about it, and he told me how kind you've been ; is that what you're crying for, Violet ?”

“O Tom, I know it's wrong and selfish

of me to be crying, only I can't help it, just a little ; don't tell Francis ; please, promise you won't."

"I won't, if you'll tell me all about it," he answered, smiling.

"Well, I don't like to. I don't want to talk about it ; but—"

"You may trust *me*," said Tom. "I'm as safe as a lock and key."

"And will you understand," said Violet, rather anxiously, "and not think that I mean what I don't ?"

"I'll try," replied Tom.

"Well, you see, little Edward Sharpe does love music so much, and it always does him good, and seems to help him to bear the pain better ; and so I've been thinking—that is, I've been saving to try and get him a little musical-box that would play him little tunes when he is lonely, and I found I could get just a small one with three tunes for thirty shillings, and I had got it all but five ; and that was all ; and I know it was very selfish, and thinking most of my own pleasure, not to be willing and ready for Francis to have it; but I won't cry any more, I've done now,"

and she looked with a brave happy smile into his face.

Tom only answered by giving her a kiss and whispering, "Well done, little Violet!" Then he added, "Now run off and put on your things to come for a walk with me."

Need we say how gladly Violet obeyed him?





CHAPTER IV.

MANY happy returns of the day, my little girl," said Mr. Thornton, as he entered the dining-room one bright April morning about three weeks after the events of our last chapter.

Violet ran forward to meet him, and he put into her hands a beautifully bound book, which she had long been wishing to possess. She thanked him with great delight, and then showed him the pretty work-box which mamma had given her, and a nice little ink-stand which Ellen and Francis had jointly surprised her with, though we suspect that Ellen had most to say to its purchase.

"I'm rich, papa, am I not?" she said delightedly.

"No; not until I have given you mine,"

whispered Tom, who was sitting beside her.

“ Well, and what are you going to do to-day ; what is to be your birth-day treat ? ” asked her father.

“ I don’t know, papa ; I’ve got a holiday, and I’ve plenty to do.”

“ Yes ; but what is to be the great treat ? ” Mrs. Thornton replied, looking over the urn. “ Cousin Charlie’s conjuring tricks this evening, and Uncle Temple and Ronald coming to spend the day.”

Violet sprang from her chair with a cry of pleasure. “ Oh, you dear good mamma, what a treat ! and Tom, do you think we can go that long scrambling walk over Ferny Hill, and round through the woods ; we should get quantities of flowers, and it would be so lovely. Oh, do let us ! ”

“ Well, we’ll try,” said Tom.

Uncle Temple and Roland arrived soon after breakfast, bringing Violet a beautiful canary-bird in a nice cage, which seemed to put the finishing stroke to her delight.

A real live pet to be taken care of—a little bird to sing to her, and to learn to

know her, and to be her very, very own ; it seemed too good to be true ; but there was Master Dick hopping about on his perch, and looking as happy and important as a new cage and the brightest of yellow coats could make him.

It was a matter of great debate where the cage was to be hung ; but at last it was decided that the best place would be in Violet's own old nursery, where Rachel now spent her life, and Violet almost her spare hours.

At twelve o'clock the party was to have started on their expedition, taking their luncheon with them ; but, alas ! for their bright hopes, and April's treacherous weather ! the sky clouded over, and when they were all assembled in the hall, they discovered that it was pouring rain. Violet's face clouded also as she saw the state of things, and with an impatient sigh she turned to Ronald, saying,—

“ It's always the way, when one has thought of anything pleasant. I do hate April weather.”

“ Oh, for shame, Violet; your own month ! ” said Ronald.

" If it wasn't for April showers and April sunshine, where would be the violets ?" said Tom.

And Ellen added,—

" ' None of all the wreaths ye prize
But was nursed by weeping skies ;
Keen March winds and April showers
Braced the roots, embalmed the flowers.' "

" Oh, bother," said Francis ; " don't quote poetry at us."

" Do you think it will clear up, Tom ?" said Violet anxiously.

" Not at present; perhaps after luncheon."

Violet turned round and walked into the dining-room with a very discontented look on her face; but in a moment or two she came back with her own sunny smile, " It's no good letting the rain waste all our morning. Ellen, let us take off our things, and then we will all have a good game at bagatelle. Ronald, you must be on my side. I won't have you as an enemy."

She seemed to come like a sunbeam amongst them, clearing up the shower, for every one's face grew contented; and in a *short time* they were all deeply engaged in *their game*.

At the end of the first one, Violet slipped away, and Tom followed her. He found her cloaked and bonneted in the hall, looking for her umbrella.

"Where are you off too?" he asked.

"O Tom, I thought I could just go and see Edward for a little while before dinner, and take him this jelly which mamma has had made for him."

"Well, look here, Violet," and Tom opened the door of the little room where he generally studied, and led her into it. "You have not had *my* birth-day present yet," and he put a little square parcel into her hands.

With hasty fingers she unfastened it, and then a cry of "Tom!—oh, how could you?" burst from her, as she discovered a musical-box.

"Will that do?" said Tom kindly.

Violet's eyes glistened with pleasure; but at length, looking up with a start, she said,—

"Tom, do you mean this for *me*?"

"I mean you to do exactly as you like with it," he answered, smiling; "*it is my birth-day present to you.*"

"Then I may give it to Edward as my own present?"

"Most certainly."

"O Tom, you dear, good brother!—how shall I thank you?"

"By enjoying your visit to Edward," he replied; and then she set off on her happy errand.

She found the little boy in greater pain than usual, and very tearful.

"O Miss Violet, it's no good. I've been trying to be patient, and trying to bear it, and it isn't any good," he said, very sorrowfully.

"Don't say that, dear Edward," whispered his little comforter. "God will make you patient if you ask him; you know we can't do anything until he helps us."

Edward smiled faintly, but then as Violet drew forth the little box, put it on the table and wound it up, his look changed to one of delighted pleasure; and when the little fairy notes—so sweet, so clear, and so ringing—fell on his ear, he half started up, then leaned forward with his finger on his lips, *and at last covered his face with his hands and cried.*



"Don't you like it?" said Violet, a little disappointed.

"Oh, it's like what I've dreamt about—it's like—O Miss Violet, will it ever play again?"

"Yes; there goes another tune, 'Home, sweet home.'"

"Oh, it seems to rest me so!—will you bring it again? Please do. I *will* be good if you'll bring it again. Indeed, I will."

"I've brought it for you altogether, Edward. You are to keep it always, so that you may never be without music," she replied.

"For *me*?—for *me*?—for my very own?" cried the little fellow eagerly.

"Yes," said Violet, almost as pleased as he was.

"Oh, what will mother say? Miss Violet, I never will cry any more."

Violet wished that Tom was there to share her joy; but as it was nearly dinner time she could not stop any longer with the happy little boy; so she watched his delight for a few moments, and then showing him the way to wind up his box, she left him, no longer fretful, tearful, and lonely, but comforted and delighted with his new treasure; and as she walked home, Violet's heart echoed the words of Him who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The afternoon was fine, and directly after luncheon the young party set out for Ferny Hill. The expedition was as prosperous as bright sunshine, lovely scenery, and happy hearts could make it, and the birth-day evening passed away delightfully. Let us leave our little Violet in the full enjoyment of it ; knowing that He who has taught her to love himself and to give her heart to him will keep her, and bless her to the end of her life ; and that she, happy in her quiet home, will continue to be the bright little flower she loves to imitate ; cheering and comforting silently all who come within her influence, and filling her own little spot in God's earth rightly and wisely, being glad in her heart because she has been given

“A work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom she waits.”





THE BLIND CHILD.

T is so beautiful to see the bright sunlight, and the green trees, and the coloured flowers, and the moon and the golden stars ; but it is a great deal more beautiful to look into the face of a good man, and see the clear light of his kind eyes ! But little Paul could see none of these things, for he was blind, and to him it was always night. Ah, how lonely and sad life must be when passed in perpetual darkness !

His mother was poor, and his father was dead ; but the last words he said to his weeping wife were, " Trust in God. God never forsakes his people."

Now the poor mother was left almost

alone in the world with her blind child—almost alone, for she had few friends, and no relations. And she had no money either, but must work diligently with her needle for her living ; but that she did not mind, and worked gladly, day and night, for her little blind boy. Sometimes she did not come home during the whole day, for she had to go and work for strangers from early morning until late in the evening ; and all that time the blind child was alone. But no, not quite alone either ; for good Martha, the old woman who lived over the way, and whose room door was directly opposite the poor mother's, came several times in the course of the day to look after little Paul—she was such a good, kind old body ! But then she could not stay with him long, for she must make haste and spin all her wool if she would not go hungry. Munter, though, a little puppy-dog, and Bibi, a dear little canary-bird, stayed with him all the while, and kept him company. The canary-bird used to sit upon his pillow and sing him the sweetest songs it knew ; and when the little boy let his hand hang down over



LITTLE PAUL'S FRIENDS.

the side of the bed, Munter would run up and lick it.

The happiest time for the little boy, *though*, was the evening, when his mother *came home*; it seemed like day then to him.

She used to put her little work-table close beside his little bed, and tell him, while she sewed away as fast as she could, of the blessedness of heaven, and of the good God and all the holy angels ; and so she entertained him with the most beautiful stories until late in the night—until he fell asleep for very weariness. Little Paul often asked, “Mother, isn’t the night almost past ?” This cut the poor woman to the heart, and sometimes she hardly knew what to answer him. “When we get to heaven,” she said sometimes, “the night will be at an end. But God’s eyes can look through the thickest darkness, and he is always looking at you, even at this moment, and keeping watch over you.”

Thus they lived together very pleasantly, until by-and-by Paul got to be six years old. At that time his mother complained one morning that she was sick, and so weak that she could not stand up. She had to stay in bed the whole day, and was seized with a burning fever. The next day she was still worse, so that she lost her reason, and became wildly delirious. Good old Martha

watched over and tended both mother and child faithfully; but when another day passed, and still the poor woman was no better, she ran to the doctor, and brought him into the sick-room. The doctor was a kind, benevolent man; he felt the sick woman's pulse, asked a great many questions about her illness, and at last shook his head. When he saw little Paul lying in his bed, he said, "That child must not stay in this room; he must be taken away immediately, for the woman is very, very sick. Has she no relations or friends to whom he could be sent?"

Then old Martha answered, "They have no relations, and few care to be the friends of the poor; but little Paul is blind."

The doctor took Paul out of his little bed, and carried him to the window, and seated him on his lap. After he had looked closely for a long time at the sightless eyes, a bright smile of pleasure passed over his face. Without saying a word he took the child in his arms, and carried him across the street to a large, fine house that stood there. In this house lived some very rich people,

friends of the doctor, who very readily agreed to his request that they would take care of the child until his mother got better. Emma, the sixteen-year-old daughter of the house, undertook the charge of him, and the kind-hearted doctor came every day to see him. After a good many days, as Paul was asking again and again for his mother, the doctor promised that he should go to her very soon, if he would promise him to hold quite still while he examined his eyes, for they were very sick too, and must be cured.

The boy promised, and kept his word from love to his mother. The doctor took a sharp instrument, and removed with it the thick skin that had hindered him from looking upon God's beautiful earth and the bright sky, and restored to him the use of his eyes. Not a single cry of pain had escaped from Paul's lips as the sharp instrument cut into his eye, and only twice had he whispered softly, "O mother!" The operation had succeeded.

The next day the doctor permitted Emma, as a reward for her care of the little boy, to remove for a few moments the bandage he

had tied over his eyes. Little Paul trembled over his whole frame as the first ray of light streamed into his opened eyes, and then exclaimed, "Now, I'm in heaven, and the night is all past!" And as he saw the bright body of the sun—though just then it was almost covered with silvery clouds—he cried out, "There is God's eye!" He looked around him, and at the blooming Emma, who stood beside him, and asked her if she was "God's angel!" But now the eyes had to be bandaged up again—so said the doctor.

The mother's illness was conquered by the skill and unwearyed care of the worthy doctor; but the weakened woman recovered very slowly, and it was many weeks before she could leave her bed. The separation from her child also gave her much uneasiness; but the kind doctor gave her his word that the boy was well, and well taken care of, and that she should see him just as soon as she was sufficiently better to bear it. But it seemed a great, great while to the longing mother.

It was a beautiful spring morning, and

the mother for the first time had left her bed, and was walking feebly across the room, when Emma led the boy, dressed in a neat new suit of clothes, across the street to the house in which his mother lived. She went up the steep, high steps with him, opened the door very softly, and pushed him gently into the room. The mother stood near the window and prayed ; she had not heard the door open, and little Paul stood timidly near it. Everything was strange to him ; he did not even know his mother ; but Munter sprang towards him, and barked so loudly with delight, that the mother turned around.

“ My Paul ! ” she cried, as soon as she saw her child ; and Paul, who knew her now by her voice, was in her arms and on her bosom in a moment. The mother hugged and kissed him, and looking affectionately into his face, started back in astonishment, exclaiming, “ Oh, he sees ! he sees ! ” “ Yes, I’m in heaven now,” answered Paul, laughing with delight. “ I have seen God’s eye, and one of his holy angels, and now the night is all past.”

Overcome with happiness and gratitude the poor woman sank upon her knees and lifted up her folded hands ; and Paul folded his little hands too, and raised them to heaven, as his mother had taught him long before to do ; and a silent prayer went up from the hearts of both to the throne of the Highest. Then came into the mother's mind the remembrance of those parting words of her dying husband, " Trust in God, God never forsakes his people."

Tears flowed from her eyes, and relieved her heart, that was almost crushed with the weight of the mercies that had been poured out upon her ; and when little Paul saw her weeping, he too shed the first tears that had ever fallen from his eyes ; but they were tears of joy.

Blessed Paul ! may all the tears thou sheddest upon earth be such as those !



